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LETTER DATED 15 JULY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GEORGIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia concerning the tragic incident that occurred on 12 July 1998 in Gali district in Abkhazia, Georgia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Peter CHKHEIDZE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

[Original: English]

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

It became known to us on 12 July 1998 that near Pichori village in the Gali region, an armoured patrol car of the Russian peacekeeping forces was blown up by a mine, resulting in five killed and three wounded military servicemen. In connection with the above fact, General S. Korobko, Commander-in-Chief of the Commonwealth of Independent States peacekeeping contingent in the conflict zone, made a protest statement on 13 July, in which he accused the Georgian side of breaching the obligations envisaged in the Gagra Protocol.

In connection with the said fact and the statement made about it by the Commander-in-Chief of the peacekeeping forces, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia submits the following statement:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia expresses its deep concern about the incident and extends its condolences to the families of the victims. It holds that such actions, being aimed at the failure of the peaceful settlement of the conflict, strain the situation in the region even more, a result fully in contradiction of our country's position and interests.

At the same time, we consider it expedient to express our anxiety in connection with General S. Korobko's irresponsible statement on the incident. It is surprising under the circumstances that the General is unfoundedly blaming the Georgian side for carrying out a terrorist act in the security zone, which is beyond Georgia's control and for which the full responsibility lies with the peacekeeping forces themselves.

If, along with the statement made by General S. Korobko, we take into account his recent statement on the plans of the Russian peacekeepers to implement the so-called strict measures jointly with the Abkhaz militia, which, in his own words, should not be perceived by Georgia as a genocide of the Georgian population, both can be, on the whole, assessed as part of a uniform, pre-planned provocation against Georgia.

It is very piteous that the above fact and General S. Korobko's statements are, willingly or unwillingly, in line with the interests of the forces displeased by the timely and peaceful settlement of the Abkhazian conflict, the unconditional return of the refugees and the rehabilitation of their private farmsteads and with the interests of those that have provoked the recent developments in the Gali region.

It is disheartening that such destructive actions have always accompanied the activation of the peaceful negotiations and that, against the background of the ongoing talks in Moscow on the Abkhazian conflict settlement issues, the developments in the conflict zone reaffirm the provocative nature of such terrorist acts.

Tbilisi, 13 July 1998